



HEALTH OF BIDEFORD

Annual Report

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

For 1919.

BIDEFORD :

Coles & Lee, Printers, Stationers, etc., Grenville Street.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b29488850>

TO THE
Bideford Urban District Council.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the pleasure herewith of presenting my Annual Report for the year ending December 31st, 1919

As will be seen from the general statistics given in the several tables, the district continues to hold its own as a Health Resort.

The general Death Rate and Infantile Mortality Death Rate remain below the average.

I am, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

ELLIS PEARSON.

BOROUGH OF BIDEFORD.

Annual Report,

1919.

Area, 3196 Statute Acres	Population last Census 1911— 9,087						
	,,		Estimated		1916—8,068		
	,,		,,		1917—8,067		
	,,		,,		1918—7,788		
	,,		,,		1919—9,442		
Inhabited Houses	...	...	...	...	...	...	2,316
Average of Persons to each house	...	...	...	...	...	...	4.08
Births Registered—Males, 77 ; Females, 54	...	...	...	...	...	Total	131
Deaths Registered—Males 36 ; Females 71	...	...	...	...	...	Total	107
Birth Rate per 1,000 of Population	...	...	...	...	...	...	13.3
Death Rate per 1,000 of Population	...	...	...	...	...	...	11.3
Infantile Mortality (9 deaths under 1 year)—Rate per 1,000 births	...	...	...	...	...	...	68.7
Tuberculosis Death Rate (14 Deaths)	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.48

Physical Features.

The town of Bideford, situated on the banks of the tidal River Torridge, slopes upwards to a considerable height, the river dividing the town into Western and Eastern portions. Bideford is largely residential. The sub-soil on which the town is built consists mostly of " shale " The general condition of the population is fairly prosperous. The collar and glove factories provide employment for a large number of the female portion of the community. The death rate is low.

The Bideford and District Hospital, supported chiefly by voluntary contributions, fills a very useful purpose in the district.

Chief Industries.

Collar factories (3), glove factories (2), workshops for the manufacture of clothing, etc. ; carriage building, motor works, chemical works and ship building, and to some extent agriculture and shipping trade.

Vital Statistics for 1919.

For statistical purposes it has been estimated that the population for 1919 shall be :

For Birth Rate, 9,836.

For Death Rate, 9,442.

THE BIRTH RATE of 13.3 per 1,000 of the population is very low, and in both rate and number of births, 131 compare unfavourable with the years 1915-1916. There is, however, a rise in the actual number of births over 1918 and 1917.

THE DEATH RATE.—Allowing for deaths transferred out of the districts, the total registered for the year is 107, giving a rate of 11.3 per 1,000 of the population. This is a very low rate, and has not been equalled since 1913, when the rate was 10.48.

INFANTILE MORTALITY. There were 9 deaths registered in infants under 1 year of age, giving a rate of 68.7 per 1,000 nett births, this is also satisfactory and compares favourably with previous years.

The following Table show the Vital Statistics for the last 5 years, and explain themselves.

TABLE II.

CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE NOTIFIED DURING THE YEAR 1919.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	NUMBER OF CASES NOTIFIED.								Total Cases Removed to Hospital
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.						65 and upwards.	
		Under 1	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 45.	45 to 65.		
Diphtheria (including Membranous Croup).	25		19	4	2			6	
Erysipelas ...	4			1			2	1	
Scarlet Fever.	4		4						
Enteric Fever ...	1		1					2	
Ophthalmia Neonatorum ...	1	1							
Pulmonary Tuberculosis ...	15		1	9	3		2		
Other forms of Tuberculosis	5		1	1	2		1		
Malaria ...	11			4	7				
Pneumonia—Influenzal ...	17		3						
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis ...	1	1		2	6		1	2	
Puerperal Fever ...	1				1				
Totals ...	85	2	3	29	21	21	6	3	
								8	

TABLE III.

CAUSES OF, AND AGES AT DEATH DURING THE YEAR 1919.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Nett Deaths at the subjoined ages of "Residents" whether occurring within or without the District.									
	All Ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 2 years.	2 and under 5 years.	5 and under 15 years.	15 and under 25 years.	25 and under 45 years.	45 and under 65 years.	65 and up- wards.	
I	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Whooping Cough ...	1			1						
Phthisis (Pulmonary ...	13				1	5	4	3		
Tuberculosis) ...	4					3		1		
Tuberculous (other form)	9							5	4	
Cancer, malignant disease	14						1	5	9	
Organic Heart Disease...	21						2	1	19	
Bronchitis ...	5	1				1			2	
Pneumonia (all forms) ...	2								1	
Appendicitis & Typhlitis	5							1	4	
Nephritis & Bright's Dis'se										
Congenital Debility and										
Malformation, including										
Premature Birth ...	2	2								
Violent Deaths, excluding										
Suicide ...	2	1			1					
Suicide	1						1			
Other defined diseases ...	28	5					4	8	11	
Diseases ill-defined or										
unknown ...										
Cerebral Hoemorrhage ...	13							5	8	
Influenza ...	5			1			1	2	1	
TOTALS ...	125	9		2	2	9	13	31	59	



TABLE IV.

INFANT MORTALITY.

1919. Nett Deaths from stated causes at various Ages under 1 Year of Age.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Under 1 week.	1-2 weeks.	2-3 weeks.	3-4 weeks.	4 weeks and under 3 months.		3-6 months.	6-9 months.	9-12 months.	Total Deaths under 1 year.
					Total under 4 weeks.					
Meningitis	1	1
Convulsions	1	...	...	3
Bronchitis
Pneumonia (all forms)	1	1
Atrophy, Debility & Marasmus	3
Violent Deaths	1
Totals	1	...	2	9

Nett Births in the year—Legitimate, 120; Illegitimate, 11.

Sanitary Circumstances of the District.

The Sanitary matters of the district are dealt with by a special Sanitary Committee of the whole Council, which meets monthly, the officials being the Medical Officer of Health, the Borough Surveyor and the Inspector of Nuisances.

SEWAGE. The sewerage of the town is in fair condition, and defects found from time to time are immediately attended to, and every effort is made to retain good sanitation.

CLOSET ACCOMMODATION. The "water carriage" system is in use in the town. Closets of the earth and bucket type many remain in the outlying districts. They are fast disappearing and in the town itself are non-existent.

SCAVENGING. The scavenging is done by the Sanitary Authority, by its own workmen, the refuse is collected regularly in carts, and dumped and treated in the town dumping ground. The work is well and efficiently done, and the streets of the town are particularly well kept and clean.

Water Supply.

The quality of water is very good. For many years, however, the supply has—in dry seasons—hardly been sufficient to meet the needs of the town. This has necessitated the cutting off of the supply at occasional intervals, and at night. The pressure has always been insufficient to give an adequate supply to the higher portion of the town. In 1914 a good deal of work was done to remedy these defects. The high-level reservoir at Gammaton was deepened and an increasing storage supply of $6\frac{1}{2}$ million gallons was provided. A high-level service reservoir was constructed on the Buckland Brewer Road, in the higher part of the town, with an Hydraulic Pumping Station situated in the Cattle Market. It was hoped that these improvements would have been sufficient to give the town a constant supply of water at good pressure. This however, has not been the case, and the town still lacks these two very important items of constant supply, at good pressure.

A further scheme, known as the "Jennet's Bridge Scheme," has been completed, and is ready to go to the Ministry of Health for

sanction. This scheme will necessitate an expenditure of £40,000. It will provide a storage of 28,000,000 gallons. It will be pumped to the service reservoir in the Buckland Brewer Road, which will be enlarged to about three times its present capacity. It is anticipated that the scheme will provide a constant supply of water, and that the pressure will be good. There is, however, a general feeling in the town that before such an expensive scheme is embarked upon, enquiries should be made as to whether a suitable arrangement could not be made with the Northam Urban District Council by means of which a sufficient water supply could be obtained from their reservoir at Melbury. Negotiations under this head are at present proceeding.

Rainfall for the Year 1919.

January	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4.99 inches.
February	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.92 ,,
March	...	..	...	..	...	...	...	5.03 ,,
April	...	...	...	..	...	...	...	2.07 ,,
May	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.23 ,,
June	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.19 ,,
July	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.11 ,,
August	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.25 ,,
September	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.04 ,,
October	...	..	..	...	...	...	...	1.78 ,,
November	...	...	...	...	..	...	...	3.79 ,,
December	...	...	...	...	..	...	...	6.24 ,,
Total								34.64 ,,

Number of days on which rain fell, 208.
 Greatest fall, November 10th, 1.10 inches.
 Lowest fall, December 17th, .01 inches.

Sanitary inspection of the District.

SANITARY INSPECTOR'S REPORT.

Houses inspected	...	..	...	..	..	..	460
Drains tested in old houses	...	...	...	...	...	...	32
Houses lime washed and renovated	...	..	..	..	..	..	14
New drains laid	...	...	...	...	...	...	10
Number of Notices served during the year—Statutory							14
" " " " " Informal							21
Result of such Notice : Work carried out.							

BAKEHOUSES.—There are 6 common bakehouses in the town. All these are above ground, they are regularly inspected and are satisfactory.

DAIRIES, MILK SHOPS AND COW SHEDS. There are 15 vendors of milk. Those having premises within the town are regularly inspected, both as regards premises and utensils. No notices have been served during the year.

SAMPLES OF MILK.—12 samples of milk have been taken during the year. Two convictions for selling milk with added water have been obtained by the action of the Council.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES.—There is a good Public Slaughterhouse in the town. There are also 4 private slaughterhouses, these are periodically inspected, and kept lime washed. Most of them, however, are cramped for room, especially as regards entrance; and their position in close proximity to dwelling houses and shops, make it difficult to remove the offal, etc., without causing a nuisance. There is a growing tendency to make more use of the Public Abbatoir than formerly.

FOOD. Bullocks, 2 carcasses condemned and destroyed as unfit for food. Other meat, about 8 cwt. condemned. Sheepheads, 12 condemned. One ton of meat condemned. Fish, 2 boxes of kippers and herrings condemned. Fruit, 8 boxes dates; vegetables and 4 cwt. onions.

LODGING HOUSES. There are no common lodging-houses in the district.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.—Houses disinfected, 48; Lots of bedding and clothing disinfected, 35.

SCHOOLS. There are 6 Public Elementary Schools in the Borough, and 4 Private Schools. These are all in good sanitary condition, and are regularly inspected.

HOUSES (OVERCROWDING). Case of overcrowding reported, 4. These cases have been dealt with as they arose and abated.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year, 97 cases of Infectious Diseases have been notified; with the exception of Small Pox practically every variety of notifiable Infectious Disease has been prevalent in the Borough, as shown by the following Table of cases notified:—

	Cases												
Diphtheria	21
Scarlet Fever	4
Measles	14
Erysipelas	4
Typhoid Fever	1
Para Typhoid Fever	1
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	1
Tuberculosis	20
Pneumonia	17
Malaria	11
Dysentery	1
Cerebro-Spinal-Meningitis	1
Puerperal Septicæmia	1

The mortality from these diseases number 19, making a death rate of 2 per 1,000 of the population. Many are spread by want of adequate means of isolation.

The incidence of Infectious Disease is considerably modified by the availability of a good Isolation Hospital. Some cases of Infectious Disease are imported into the Borough; many cannot be adequately isolated at home, or properly nursed, family isolation means spreading the disease and is usually detrimental to the patient,. An Isolation Hospital is therefore of paramount importance to the Borough. The present Isolation Hospital is quite inadequate and out-of-date, it has no accommodation for nurses and no means of disinfecting the beds and bedding; it is called upon to receive different classes of infectious disease, cases that should always be isolated separately. A scheme has been on foot for some little time for providing an Isolation Hospital, not only for the Borough, but for the neighbouring Borough of Northam, and the neighbouring Rural Districts, a Hospital capable of receiving three different kinds of Infectious Disease, with proper means of disinfection, and proper Nurses' accommodation is instantly needed, and it is to be hoped that the matter will no longer be delayed. The Sanitary Authority provide disinfectants for use in infectious cases, Diphtheria anti-toxin is provided by the County Council and is always available. Diphtheria anti-toxin, influenza vaccine, anti-tetanus serum are always available. The bacteriological examination of Sputum, Diphtheria Swabs is undertaken by the County Council, and is readily

available. All cases of infectious disease are notified immediately ; this applies to Tuberculosis, which is notified as soon as the diagnose can be made.

DIPHTHERIA.—When necessary, and if the present Isolation Hospital is available these cases are removed there. Swabs are examined through the County M.O.H. Diphtheria anti-toxin is always available.

SCARLET FEVER.—When necessary, and when the Hospital is available are removed there.

TUBERCULOSIS.—All cases of Tuberculosis are notified as soon as a diagnosis can be made. Bacteriological examination of the sputum is undertaken by the County M.O.H. Sterilized pots for sending Sputum with suitable box for packing and addressed envelope are readily available. postage is not paid. The Tuberculosis Officer is readily available for all cases. As a rule patients are willing and anxious to benefit by facilities offered, and the medical profession most anxious to co-operate in every way possible. The more general complaint is the delay in obtaining Sanatorium Benefit, and the discharging of patients back to their old and often insanitary conditions.

Maternity and Child Welfare.

The Child Welfare Centre was started during the year under the control of the Council. At first it was not a great success, and the attendances were very low, this condition however, very soon altered, and the Centre is doing very good work, the average attendance is about 20, the Centre is in charge of the Health Visitor, and visited by the Medical Officer of Health. There is no Maternity Centre, the County Council is the supervising authority under the Midwives Act. There is one Midwife working under the Council, permission is given for assistance to be called on when and where needed. One case of Ophthalmia and one case of Puerperal Fever were notified during the year.

Hospital.

There is a Voluntary Hospital of 25 beds. This Hospital supplies a very great need of the district, receiving as it does, cases from the adjacent district of Northam, and from the surrounding country, embracing an area of some 15 miles in extent. Plans to bring the Hospital, which is already overcrowded, up-to-date and to enlarge it to some 40 beds, have been made, and it is anticipated that the necessary work will shortly be put in hand.

Housing.

There are 2,316 houses in the town, giving an average of 4.08 persons to each house.

WORKING CLASS HOUSES.—These number 1,547, and are let at the following rentals :—

8 Houses at 3/2 per week.			
138	„	3/6	„
222	„	4/-	„
231	„	4/6	„
531	„	5/-	„
204	„	5/6	„
122	„	6/-	„
30	„	7/-	„
61	„	8/-	„
<hr/>			
1,547			

In 1914 a very thorough inspection of the houses and housing needs of the town was made, there was then a scarcity of houses suitable for the working classes, and at a rental they could afford to pay.

Inspection shows :—

- (1) UNFIT HOUSES.—These number at least 40, that is, houses unfit for human habitation, chiefly on account of lack of free ventilation. They are mostly old houses in which the defects cannot be remedied.
- (2) AREAS.—There are several areas of unfit houses. These are small areas scattered through the town, consisting of two or three houses as a rule in a court, or drang. The number of houses affected is approximately 80.
- (3) OVERCROWDING.—There is a certain amount of overcrowding in the town at present. This is rectified at once when possible. There are 9 houses intended for occupation by one family, now occupied by two. This is owing to the lack of housing accommodation in the town.
- (4) DEFECTIVE HOUSES.—These are being continually rectified as cases occur. There are a good many houses of this class. Old houses, still suitable for habitation, but which require constant repairs and alterations. Orders for the same to be carried out are constantly being given by the Sanitary Authority.
Under this section of the Housing Act, 1909, the following action has been taken :—
Houses Inspected, 460.
Repairs ordered and carried out, 35.
Drains tested, 32.
Houses lime washed and renovated, 14.
New drains laid, 10.
- (5) CLOSING ORDERS.—No Closing Orders have been made during the year, either for defective houses or areas. The present scarcity making it impossible to close down houses, until accommodation in the shape of new houses is provided.

(6) DWELLING HOUSES USED FOR OTHER PURPOSES.—There are a certain number of dwelling houses, chiefly of the large type in the town that are used as stores or warehouses. These are not suitable for turning into tenements, but their use as legitimate dwelling houses would probably set free some of the smaller houses and give more accommodation in the town.

NEW HOUSES.—Sites for the erection of 140 new houses have been obtained and plans for same drawn and passed by the Regional Commissioners. It is contemplated that the erection of 80 of these will be commenced as soon as possible, Any delay in the matter will be due only to the inability to obtain the money to pay for the building and to obtain contracts for the work.

As soon as new houses are erected, and sufficient accommodation provided for the population, then Closing Orders will be made on all defective houses and areas.

Factories and Workshops Act, 1901.

Factories, Workshops and Workplaces have been frequently inspected.

List of outworkers—None received.

(1) Inspection of Factories, Workshops and Workplaces—

	Inspections	Written Notices	Prosecutions
Factories (including Factory Laundries)	8	8	nil.
Workshop (including Workshop Laundries)	4	4	nil.
Workplaces (other than outworkers premises)	10	1	nil.
	—	—	—
Total	22	7	nil

(2) Defects found in Factories, Workshops and Workplaces :—
Repairs, etc., 1 found necessary and remedied.

(3) Total number of Workshops on Register, 82.



